



The Implementation of Role Play Method for Improving Speaking Skills in Grade 11 at SMAN 1 Kisaran

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ABSTRACT

This research explores how role play activities can transform English speaking skills among Grade 11 students at SMAN 1 Kisaran. The study was conducted using a quasi-experimental design with 60 students divided into experimental and control groups over 8 weeks. The experimental group participated in structured role play sessions three times per week, engaging in scenarios like restaurant conversations, job interviews, and shopping dialogues. Data was collected through pre-tests, post-tests, classroom observations, and confidence surveys. The findings show remarkable improvements: students in the role play group increased their speaking fluency by 38%, accuracy by 35%, pronunciation by 29%, and confidence by 42% compared to the control group. The research demonstrates that role play creates an engaging, low-pressure environment where students naturally develop their speaking skills by "becoming" different characters, which reduces anxiety and encourages experimentation with the language. The study concludes that role play should be integrated as a core teaching strategy in Indonesian high schools to address students' fear of speaking English, making language learning more effective and enjoyable.

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking English confidently remains one of the biggest challenges for Indonesian high school students. Despite years of studying grammar and vocabulary, many students freeze up when asked to have a real conversation in English. This creates a frustrating cycle where students know the language theoretically but struggle to use it practically in real-world situations. At SMAN 1 Kisaran, teachers noticed that Grade 11 students often remained silent during English classes, not because they didn't understand, but because they felt anxious about making mistakes. Traditional teaching methods focusing on textbook exercises and grammar drills weren't giving students enough opportunities to practice speaking in natural, comfortable settings. Students would memorize dialogues perfectly but couldn't adapt them to spontaneous conversations.

The problem runs deeper than just classroom dynamics. Indonesian students face several barriers to effective English speaking. First, the cultural emphasis on avoiding mistakes creates perfectionist tendencies that prevent students from taking risks with language. Second, large class sizes limit individual speaking practice time. Third, the teacher-centered approach doesn't encourage peer interaction and collaborative learning. Finally, the lack of authentic contexts makes English feel abstract and disconnected from students' lives.

Research shows that speaking anxiety affects up to 70% of Indonesian English learners, significantly impacting their academic performance and future career prospects. In today's globalized world, English speaking skills are crucial for accessing higher education opportunities, international jobs, and global communication. Students who can't speak English confidently miss out on scholarships, exchange programs, and professional advancement.

Role play emerges as a promising solution because it transforms the classroom into a safe space where students can "become" different characters and practice English through acting. When students pretend to be someone else - a doctor, a tourist, or a shop owner - they often feel less self-conscious about their language mistakes. This psychological freedom allows them to experiment with new vocabulary and expressions without the fear of being judged personally.

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The theoretical foundation for role play effectiveness lies in several learning principles. As emphasized by Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, learners build knowledge through active participation and social interaction, which naturally occurs when students engage in role play scenarios and construct meaning through dialogue and negotiation. Bandura's social learning theory further supports this approach by highlighting the importance of modeling and observation, which students experience as they watch and learn from each other's performances during role play activities.

Furthermore, role play aligns with Krashen's communicative language teaching approaches that prioritize real-world communication over grammatical accuracy. This method creates authentic contexts where students must use English to achieve specific goals, such as ordering food, complaining about a product, or applying for a job. These meaningful interactions motivate students because they see immediate relevance to their lives.

The affective filter hypothesis, as proposed by Krashen, also supports role play implementation. When students feel relaxed and confident, their emotional barriers to learning decrease, allowing for better language acquisition. Role play reduces anxiety by providing a "mask" of character that protects students' self-esteem while they practice speaking.

Ahmad and Munawaroh (2022) support this approach by demonstrating that role play methods significantly enhance students' speaking abilities by creating interactive and engaging learning environments. Their research indicates that students show increased motivation and participation when learning through role play activities compared to traditional teaching methods.

Harahap (2022) further reinforces the effectiveness of role play in improving speaking skills, particularly noting that students develop better fluency and confidence when they can practice English in realistic scenarios. The study emphasizes that role play helps students overcome psychological barriers that typically prevent them from speaking English naturally.

Henisah et al. (2023) contribute to this understanding by highlighting how role play techniques create authentic communication contexts that mirror real-world situations. Their research demonstrates that students who participate in role play activities show measurable improvements in both speaking accuracy and communicative competence.

The research aims to answer a crucial question: Can role play activities significantly improve Grade 11 students' speaking skills while making English learning more enjoyable? This study investigates whether structured role play sessions can help students overcome their speaking anxiety and develop better fluency, pronunciation, and confidence in English communication. The research also explores how role play affects student motivation and engagement with English learning.

METHOD

This research employed a quasi-experimental design to investigate the effectiveness of role play method in improving speaking skills among Grade 11 students at SMAN 1 Kisaran. The study compared two groups over an 8-week period: an experimental group that participated in role play activities and a control group that received traditional speaking instruction.

1. Participants and Setting

The study involved 60 Grade 11 students aged 16-17 years, selected through purposive sampling based on similar English proficiency levels. Students were divided into two groups of 30 participants each, with the experimental group engaging in role play activities while the control group received conventional textbook-based instruction. All participants had previous semester English scores between 65-75, ensuring comparable baseline abilities.

2. Role Play Implementation

The experimental group participated in structured role play sessions three times per week, each lasting 45 minutes. Each session followed a consistent structure: warm-up activities (5 minutes), character assignment and scenario briefing (10 minutes), role play performance (25 minutes), and reflection and feedback (5 minutes). The scenarios included restaurant conversations, job interviews, shopping dialogues, travel situations, problem-solving scenarios, medical consultations, and hotel reservations.

3. Data Collection and Assessment

Speaking skills were evaluated using four key components: fluency (smooth speech flow without excessive hesitation), accuracy (correct grammar and vocabulary usage), pronunciation (clear and understandable speech patterns), and confidence (willingness to participate and express ideas). Data was collected through pre-tests and post-tests using standardized speaking assessments, classroom observations, confidence surveys, and student interviews. Each component was scored on a 25-point scale, creating a total possible score of 100 points.

4. Data Analysis

The research utilized both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods. Quantitative data from pre-tests and post-tests were analyzed using statistical comparisons (t-tests) to measure significant improvements. Qualitative data from interviews and observations were analyzed thematically to understand the underlying factors contributing to student improvement. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's *d* to determine the practical significance of the observed improvements.

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of the study regarding the implementation of role play method in teaching speaking skills at SMAN 1 Kisaran. The role play strategy, originally conceptualized by educational theorists as a form of experiential

learning, is designed to help students practice language skills through authentic interactions and character embodiment. The findings are organized according to the four key speaking components measured in this study and supported by observational, interview, and assessment data.

The results reveal dramatic improvements in students' speaking abilities after participating in role play activities. The experimental group showed significant progress across all measured areas, demonstrating that role play creates an effective learning environment for developing English speaking skills.

1. Fluency: Developing Natural Speech Flow

The "Fluency" component showed remarkable improvement as students gained confidence in maintaining continuous speech without excessive hesitation. By embodying different characters in various scenarios, students developed natural rhythm and pace in their English speaking. For instance, during classroom observation, one student enthusiastically shared her experience after playing a hotel receptionist:

"Waktu jadi resepsionis hotel, aku jadi berani ngomong terus tanpa mikir takut salah. Serasa beneran kerja di hotel," (Student A, interview, March 8th, 2025).

Amari et al. (2023) support these findings by noting that role play methods effectively improve students' speaking fluency by providing natural conversation contexts that encourage continuous speech production

2. Accuracy: Improving Grammar and Vocabulary Usage

The "Accuracy" component helped students apply correct grammar structures and appropriate vocabulary naturally through contextual practice. Students learned to adjust their language formality based on the role they were playing, leading to more precise language use.

"Biasanya aku asal ngomong, tapi waktu jadi customer di restoran, aku jadi mikir harus pakai 'could I have' bukan 'can I have' biar lebih sopan," (Student B, interview, , March 8th, 2025).

Br. Sitanggang (2024) confirms that role play techniques enhance grammatical accuracy by allowing students to practice language structures in meaningful contexts rather than isolated exercises.

3. Pronunciation: Enhancing Speech Clarity

Students demonstrated improved pronunciation after engaging in role play activities. The "Pronunciation" component benefited from students' natural tendency to mimic different speaking styles while portraying various characters.

"Dulu malu ngomong karena pronunciation jelek, sekarang setelah main peran jadi tour guide, aku jadi lebih jelas ngomongnya," (Student C, interview, March 8th, 2025).

Doorvina (2021) emphasizes that role play activities naturally improve pronunciation as students imitate different characters and speech patterns, leading to clearer articulation and better phonetic awareness.

4. Confidence: Building Speaking Courage

Students showed increased willingness to participate and express their ideas after experiencing the psychological safety that role play provided. The "Confidence" component improved as students felt protected by their character roles.

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"Kalau main peran jadi orang lain, aku nggak nervous lagi. Soalnya kalau salah, yang salah karakternya, bukan aku," (Student D, interview, March 8th, 2025).

Hakim (2020) reinforces this finding by demonstrating that role play methods significantly boost students' confidence levels by creating a supportive learning environment where students feel safe to express themselves without fear of judgment.

5. Overall Speaking Performance Improvement

In addition to qualitative findings, students' speaking scores also showed clear improvement after the implementation of the role play strategy (Karmila, 2023). Before using role play, many students had difficulty expressing ideas fluently and organizing their thoughts coherently. After the classroom sessions using role play, the overall quality of their speaking improved noticeably.

Tabel 1. Quantitative Results

Speaking Component	Experimental Group		Control Group		Improvement Gap
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	
Fluency (0-25)	12.3	17.0	12.1	13.5	2.6 points
Accuracy (0-25)	13.2	17.8	13.0	14.9	2.9 points
Pronunciation (0-25)	11.8	15.2	11.6	13.1	1.9 points
Confidence (0-25)	10.5	14.9	10.3	11.2	3.5 points
Total Score (0-100)	47.8	64.9	47.0	52.7	11.5 points

Tabel 2. Percentage Improvements by Component

Component	Experimental Group Improvement	Control Group Improvement	Difference
Fluency	38.2%	11.6%	26.6%
Accuracy	34.8%	14.6%	20.2%
Pronunciation	28.8%	12.9%	15.9%
Confidence	41.9%	8.7%	33.2%

Analysis of Improvements

1. Fluency Enhancement:

Students in the role play group increased their speaking fluency by 38.2% compared to only 11.6% in the control group. They could maintain conversations for longer periods without awkward pauses and expressed their ideas more smoothly. Many students reported feeling more natural when speaking English after practicing through character interactions. The average speaking time per student increased from 45 seconds to 78 seconds during assessment tasks.

2. Accuracy Gains:

Grammar and vocabulary accuracy improved by 34.8% in the experimental group versus 14.6% in the control group. Students began using more complex sentence structures and demonstrated better understanding of appropriate vocabulary choices in different contexts. The role play scenarios

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helped them learn when to use formal versus informal language. Error rates decreased from 8.2 errors per minute to 4.1 errors per minute.

3. Pronunciation Enhancement:

The most surprising finding was a 28.8% improvement in pronunciation clarity among role play participants compared to 12.9% in the control group. Students naturally mimicked different accents and speech patterns while acting, which helped them develop better English pronunciation without formal phonetic training. Intelligibility scores improved from 65% to 84% based on native speaker evaluations.

4. Confidence Breakthrough:

Perhaps most importantly, student confidence levels increased by 41.9% in the experimental group versus only 8.7% in the control group. Students who previously remained silent began volunteering to speak and actively participated in English discussions. Many reported that becoming a character helped them overcome their fear of making mistakes.

Qualitative Observations

1. Engagement and Motivation:

Classroom observations showed that role play sessions had 85% active participation rates compared to 45% in traditional classes. Students laughed more, asked more questions, and showed genuine enthusiasm for English learning. Several students continued practicing role play scenarios during break times and requested additional characters to portray.

2. Peer Interaction:

Role play fostered collaborative learning where students naturally helped each other with vocabulary, pronunciation, and cultural expressions. Students formed supportive partnerships and provided constructive feedback to improve each other's performances.

3. Creative Expression:

Many students demonstrated unexpected creativity in their role play performances, adding personal touches and improvising beyond the given scenarios. This creativity seemed to enhance their language retention and made learning more memorable.

4. Anxiety Reduction:

Post-treatment interviews revealed that 87% of experimental group students felt less anxious about speaking English compared to 23% in the control group. Students reported that the acting aspect helped them feel protected from personal judgment.

5. All improvements in the experimental group were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) when compared to the control group, with large effect sizes indicating practical importance of the improvements.

DISCUSSION

The remarkable success of role play in improving speaking skills can be understood through several psychological and pedagogical factors that create an optimal learning environment for language acquisition.

Psychological Safety and Character Protection

Role play creates a protective mask that allows students to experiment with English without feeling personally judged. When students pretend to be restaurant customers or hotel receptionists, they feel less anxiety about their mistakes because they're acting rather than revealing their true language abilities. This psychological distance enables risk-taking and experimentation essential for language learning. As Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences suggests, role play activities engage kinesthetic, interpersonal, and linguistic intelligences simultaneously, allowing students who struggle with traditional textbook learning to excel because it matches their learning style preferences.

Auliyati et al. (2021) support this perspective through their systematic literature review, demonstrating that role play methods effectively reduce speaking anxiety by providing psychological protection through character embodiment. Their research shows that students feel more comfortable expressing themselves when they can distance their personal identity from their speaking performance.

Contextual Learning and Authentic Communication

Unlike isolated grammar exercises, role play provides meaningful contexts where students understand why they need specific vocabulary and structures. Learning "May I help you?" feels natural when acting as a shop assistant, making the language memorable and purposeful. This approach aligns with Chomsky's understanding of language acquisition, which emphasizes that meaningful communication contexts are essential for developing natural language competence rather than mere performance.

Collaborative Learning Environment

Role play activities encourage collaborative learning where students support each other's language development. Students often helped partners with vocabulary or pronunciation during scenarios, creating a supportive learning community rather than competitive atmosphere. This collaborative aspect reflects Dewey's progressive education philosophy, which advocates for learning through social interaction and shared experiences rather than passive absorption of information.

Real-World Preparation and Practical Application

The scenarios chosen for role play directly prepare students for actual English conversations they might encounter in tourism, business, or academic settings. This practical relevance motivates students because they see immediate applications for their learning. The effectiveness of this approach is supported by Bruner's constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that learning becomes more effective when students can connect new information to their existing knowledge and life experiences.

The findings align with communicative language teaching principles,

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suggesting that meaningful interaction and authentic communication contexts are crucial for developing speaking skills. The research supports the idea that language learning should be experiential and socially constructed rather than purely cognitive.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that role play method can revolutionize English speaking instruction in Indonesian high schools. The significant improvements in fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and confidence among Grade 11 students at SMAN 1 Kisaran prove that innovative teaching approaches can overcome traditional barriers to English speaking. The study provides compelling evidence that role play is not just an entertaining classroom activity but a powerful pedagogical tool that addresses fundamental challenges in English language learning.

The success of role play lies in its ability to create psychologically safe, contextually meaningful, and highly engaging learning experiences. Students develop speaking skills naturally through interaction and experimentation rather than forced repetition and drilling. This approach addresses the root cause of speaking anxiety while building practical communication abilities that students can immediately apply in real-world situations.

The research findings have significant implications for English education in Indonesia and similar contexts. The 38% improvement in fluency, 35% increase in accuracy, 29% enhancement in pronunciation, and 42% boost in confidence demonstrate that role play can transform students from reluctant speakers into confident communicators. These improvements are not merely statistical gains but represent meaningful changes in students' ability to express themselves in English.

This study opens new possibilities for making English learning more effective and enjoyable in Indonesian educational contexts. When students can laugh, interact, and express themselves freely, they naturally develop the speaking skills that traditional methods often fail to achieve. Role play proves that learning English doesn't have to be boring or stressful - it can be an adventure where students discover their voice in a new language.

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